

# SPORTS

# C

MONDAY, MAY 30, 1994



DAN O'MEARA

## How about those Harrison Hawks? Now they're No. 1

It was a moment Harrison High School softball players had waited a long time to see happen in more ways than one.

In the short term, the dozen girls on the 1994 team had convinced coach Mike Teachman they should carve their nicknames into the hair around his head.

"That was in the event Harrison defeated Walled Lake Central and won the Western Lakes Activities Association championship.

The Hawks did (7-0), which we'll say more about later, and Teachman sat contentedly late Wednesday afternoon while his players did their handiwork afterward.

"All of us hung our razors on the fence before the game to help get us pumped up," Harrison junior Stephanie Schwalm said.

To be sure, the Bic razors propped between the fencing like tiny softball bats were an ominous sign.

So how does Teachman's hair read now? It says DAWGS, and he more than anybody is responsible for that.

Impressed by the grit, determination and perseverance of his players this year, he sought a nickname that would represent their collective attitude in competition. He settled on junkyard dogs.

"They're willing to get dirty," Teachman said. "They fight back when they're backed up against the fence, and junkyard dogs have great loyalty to each other."

"It was in the Troy game (for the championship of the Farmington tournament). They had already played three games, but they were bright-eyed and bushy-tailed and ready to play. I said to myself 'We have some junkyard dogs here.'"

**Hawks do outfield**  
In the big picture, winning the WLAA championship was something the long-suffering Hawks had waited years to achieve.

In fact, not so long ago, few people would have ever thought they would use the words Harrison, softball and champions in the same sentence.

That kind of background is what has made the '94 Hawks such an incredible story.

Harrison is having its most successful season in history, compiling a 21-4 record to go with its Western Division and league titles. Just a year ago, the Hawks were winless (0-10) in the division, won only two of 16 league games and were 6-17 overall.

"But there's something hidden in there," Teachman said. "All these juniors and sophomores were sophomores and freshmen then. We had 10 sophomores and freshmen who learned how to play."

"Another group probably wouldn't be able to handle that, but this is such a good group. It was a process of learning the game last year and the first few weeks of this year, and they found out they're a little better than they thought they were."

"Individually, they can't feel that way, but with team defense, timely hits and the willingness to sacrifice up and down the lineup we're in real good shape."

Teachman is the first to say having talent helps and makes a coach look good.

The Hawks have an outstanding pitcher in junior Erin LaCrosse, whose rapid development at that position in the last year is another interesting success story, and Harrison has a good fielder at every position. Whereas, pitching and defense were liabilities in the past, they are now assets.

Seniors Amanda Ault and Becky Macek, juniors Jenny Myslinshi, Amy Geary, Lori Hobbie, Kelly LaCrosse, Kathy Schneider and Jodie Barringer complete the roster and are solid high school players from what I've seen in big games this year.

"I like to think it's genealogy and demographics," Teachman said. "Parents had some good kids, and they all live in the same area."

**Teachman persevered, too**  
He hasn't forgotten the players who stayed with the program through the lean years, however. Teachman didn't give up either, though the program had just one other winning season since he became coach in 1980.

"I think of all the girls who kept the program going, because they kept coming back with great attitudes and ready to play regardless of the fact they might get mercied," Teachman said.

"I had doubts whether I was doing the right things, but their attitudes and smiling faces told me 'Yeah, you are' and kept me going."

"High school sports should be fun; it keeps you young, being a part of it."

Harrison's turnaround and success has been well documented on these pages in recent months, and the chronicling of it has been like a fresh breeze blowing through girls spring sports in Farmington, especially softball.

See O'MEARA, 2C



SHARON LEMIEUX/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Home run happiness: Harrison players are all smiles after Stephanie Schwalm (third from left) hit a three-run homer in the WLAA championship game. The other players are Becky Macek (from left), Jenny Myslinshi, Kristen Koziara, Holly Foster, Amanda Ault, Jodie Barringer and Erin LaCrosse.

## Hawks fly '94 softball pennant



After years of struggling not just to win but to be competitive, the Harrison High softball team is at last enjoying the good side of sports, having earned its first Western Lakes Activities Association title last week with a 7-0 win.

BY DAN O'MEARA  
STAFF WRITER

Stephanie Schwalm wondered to herself as she raced around the bases Wednesday if she had the energy to complete the circuit in time.

The junior outfielder made it home safely for a three-run homer that sparked Farmington Hills Harrison to its first Western Lakes Activities Association softball championship.

"I got to third and I didn't think I could make it home; I was so tired," said Schwalm after the Hawks

blanked visiting Walled Lake Central 7-0.

"I was hoping it wouldn't be a close play, because I didn't think I was running very fast; I didn't think it would be a home run; I thought it would probably be a double."

The Hawks (21-4) put the finishing touches on an amazing comeback after finishing last in the Western Division a year ago. It was their first title since winning the Western Six Conference championship in 1979.

Harrison also received excellent pitching again from junior Erin La-

Crosse, who threw a one-hitter and stuck out nine.

She pitched a no-hitter through six innings but gave up a leadoff single to Angie Marino in the seventh. Harrison second baseman Jodie Barringer promptly turned a double play before LaCrosse retired the side with a groundout.

"We saw who the best pitcher in the league is," Harrison coach Mike Teachman said. "She came up big in all the big games, and the fact we played defense after eight errors against Northville (Monday) helped."

Central had only two other baserunners, both in the third when LaCrosse walked consecutive batters with one out. The threat ended with a strikeout and tapper back to LaCrosse.

Erin, with the exception of one

moment, was in complete control," Teachman said. "There's just no doubt she's No. 1 in our league, and you have to remember she's only been pitching on the varsity level for a year and a half."

For the Vikings (17-11), it was another championship game that ended in disappointment. Central won the 1990 title and has been the runner-up four straight years.

"I told the girls, 'There are 12 teams in our league, and it's just an honor for you to be here,'" Central coach Gordon Glennie said. "Ten other teams aren't playing for the championship."

"It's nice to win it all, but we accomplished a lot just here. They could have folded, being down 7-0.

See HAWKS, 2C

## Falcons clipped in 'A' district final, 5-0

BY BRAD EMONS  
STAFF WRITER

Livonia Churchill took care of business in Saturday's Class A district girls soccer final with a workmanlike 5-0 triumph over visiting Farmington.

Sophomore Marie Spaccatrotella scored three times, while Andrea Will and Liz Sakryhalo added goals for the victorious Chargers (14-3-2 overall).

Margaret Wirth, Janessa Vartanian, Lori Leszczynski, Michelle Zawialak and Kerri Verardi each drew assists for the Chargers, who led 2-0 at halftime.

"Churchill had one really good

goal, but we felt very good at half-time," said Farmington coach Bob Neff, whose team lost to the Chargers 8-3 in the last meeting. "I think we started tiring in the second half. They have a lot of speed and they're a good team. I thought for three-quarters of the game we played with them."

Churchill, which captured its fifth district title since 1987 under coach Nick O'Shea, now gets a rematch with nemesis Plymouth Canton. The two teams will meet again at 6 p.m. Tuesday in the regional semifinals at Walled Lake Central.

Canton, the Western Lakes Activities Association co-champ along with

Livonia Stevenson, won the last outing against Churchill, 1-0, on a goal which was believed to have been scored after time had expired.

"We're looking forward to it because Canton has knocked us out the last two years running," O'Shea said. "And we're out to avenge our earlier loss."

O'Shea kept standout midfielder Aimee Cousino on the bench against Farmington. She has a slight hamstring pull. Ironically, Cousino missed half of the Canton game with the same injury.

"She hurt it in our Stevenson game and we didn't want to chance it,"

O'Shea said. "She should be all right. It's just a slight pain. We should be able to adjust because we've played 6 1/2 games without her."

Farmington, meanwhile, bows out with 5-6-2 record. Four seniors — Maggie Frump, Amanda Lachmann, Eunice Lee, Laura McWilliam — will be lost to graduation.

"We're happy to get to this spot," Neff said. "We're disappointed, but we're hopeful we lost to the future state champs."

"I think the Canton-Churchill game will end up like the Stevenson game. It will be a real close contest."

## Gordon, Burcar pace North in WLAA track

BY BRAD EMONS  
STAFF WRITER

It was a re-run of the Class A regional girls track meet but with a little more drama.

Once again Plymouth Canton brought home a title with neighbor Plymouth Salem right behind during the Western Lakes Activities Association meet Wednesday at Livonia Churchill.

Canton unseated Salem as two-time defending WLAA champ with a team-high 129 points. Salem, runner-up behind Canton at the regional May 20 at Redford Union, 118-73, inched closer this time with 103 points.

North Farmington and Livonia Stevenson finished third and fourth with 93 and 79 points, respectively.

Canton coach George Prygodski was slated with the results. It was Canton's first league title since 1991.

The Chiefs also met all four of their goals this season, winning the Western Division dual meet crown, the Mangan Trophy (in a dual vs. Salem), the regional and the WLAA.

"When somebody is down there was always somebody else to pick us up," Prygodski said. "We knew Salem would be coming after us and they didn't hold anything back because they're a fine, fine team."

Prygodski calls this 1994 team "the best in school history," and who could argue?

Canton racked up 22 points in the 300-meter hurdles, as Mary Anderson (40.98) and Nancy Hoffman (48.04) finished one-two. Shawn Champlin added a fifth (49.37).

The Chiefs scored 21 more in the 3,200 run as senior Lana, Beroditch outdistanced season-long nemesis Bridget MacKinnon of Stevenson for first place (11:30.48). Canton's Laura McWilliams (12:07.99) and Becky Wolfson (12:19.19) were third and fourth.

Beroditch also won the 1,600 run in 5:20.83 to MacKinnon's 5:21.93.

"Lana wanted to go out with a bang and she did," Prygodski said. "She's just a fierce competitor."



ART ENGBLE/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

WLAA champion: North Farmington junior Alisha Gordon was a double winner in the shot put (left) and discus.

See WLAA GIRLS, 2C